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A Doctoral Resume

EXPLORATIONS INTO THE PASSIONATE CHARACTERS OF ARUN JOSHI'S NOVELS: A CRITICAL STUDY

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1. INTRODUCTION

Indian English fiction started with an awareness of historical, social and political issues in India. In reality, novel as a genre was new to India only in the last a hundred odd years it has taken root in India and gone ahead of all other genres. Besides English, in many Indian languages, there have been many novels written since then.

Bankinchandra Chaterji's 'Rajmohan's Wife' was considered the first novel which brought political subject into the ambit of fiction. It was only after independence that Indian novel has grown in quality and quantity. The three great writers Mulk Raj Anand, R.K.Narayan and Raja Rao with their efforts and innovative techniques have contributed to the Indian fiction in English. With their output and achievement "Indian fiction has made important strides".

The fiction that was written between 1930 and 1947 was concerned with social and political conditions in the country. The novels in the post-independence era concerned themselves with the impact of Gandhian freedom struggle and the birth of a nation. Mulk Raj Anand with his passion for the underprivileged, used novel as a weapon to bring about a change in the society.

R.K.Narayan, like Anand has no axes to grind. He is pure and simple. His main weapon is good humored irony in exposing the inherent vulnerability of the human condition. The plot of his novels is set in an imaginary world called Malgudi which is an archetype of any Indian village.

Raja Rao, the youngest of the trio is less prolific compared to other two writers. But, in his hands, the fiction got a philosophical dimension and thereby international recognition. After independence, three major writers Babani Battacharya, G.V.Desani and R.K.Narayan published their path-breaking works. Desani's **All About H.Hatter** is a great experimental novel. "It is joycean exercise in seeming incoherence". As such, many kinds of things and techniques have been tried by the Indian novelists after independence were like partition and its terrible aftermath war with Pakistan and China.

There has also been found in the women writers a concern for the poor and social evils and human relations in the changing situation. Thus, the women novelists, Kamala Markendeya, Ruth Prawar Jhabvala, Nayantara Sahgal, Anita Desai, Shashi Deshpande and Arundati Roy have added another dimension to the Indian fiction in English.

The novelists till now seem to have overused themes such as hunger, poverty, sex, exploitation, east-west encounter and Indian freedom struggle. Their main concern appears to be the man in the society

either as an individual or as a part of larger community. They have neglected the inner world of the man. They lay very less emphasis on the psychological trauma of the individual.

But, it is in the novels of Anita Desai and Arun Joshi that one can find a concern for the inner world of sensibility. While Anita Desai has employed the techniques of stream of consciousness and flash back to depict the inner turbulence of her characters, Arun Joshi's delineation of the mental agonies of his characters is on the lines of existentialist novelists. The western counterparts of Indian novelists have overdone the existentialist themes. But, these themes have caught the fancy of Indian authors and novels with a little variation in themes are being written. These thematic concerns have had their sway on the Indian literary scene for a considerable period. But, the modern sensitive writers have shifted their focus from the public sphere, unlike those earlier writers who concerned themselves with social realism.

In the light of above understanding of the concerns of the novelists writing before and after independence, I wish to make a study of Arun Joshi's fiction placing him in the context of changing literary concerns.

Arun Joshi's thematic concerns have actually been misunderstood. Unlike other writers, he does not subscribe to any idealism to look relevant in the world of modern fiction. He propagates no spurious ideals but his main concern is to provide his readers aesthetic pleasure through his longer and shorter fiction. Devender Mohan observes that Arun Joshi's novels "have been labeled as dealing with the theme of alienation which is too static a signifier to catch up with the encaged experience of madness at the bottom conflicting civilizations and languages". In fact, Arun Joshi's protagonists are tireless questers for the meaning in life. The words meaningless and alienation are not adequate to prove that Arun Joshi's heroes are escapists and afraid of the realities. Instead of being reclusives or renouncers of life, Arun Joshi's protagonists are deeply involved in the act of living and that their predominant passion is to reflectively consider the element of choice.

Thus, the fictional world of Arun Joshi is peopled with characters who are active and passionate individuals. They always strive hard to find meaning in life. Their search for identity leads to exposure of the intricate human bonds that get strengthened with their active participation in life.

The present study aims at exploring the thematic concerns in Arun Joshi's fictional world both longer and shorter with a special focus on the inner world of sensibility.

Arun Joshi authored five novels, **The Foreigner (1968), The Strange case of Billy Biswas (1971), The Apprentice (1974), The Last Labyrinth (1981) and The City and The River (1990)**.

2. Significance of the study

The study in this field will bring the unexplored area of research in limelight. The study attempts to make a general survey and criticism of Arun Joshi's novels. The study uses various disciplines like sociology and psychology in a flexible manner and in different combinations. The study also attempts to broader critical perspectives that allow a fuller understanding of Arun Joshi's novels.

3. Hypothesis

Arun Joshi's main concern is to provide his readers aesthetic pleasure through his fictions. In fact, Arun Joshi's protagonists are tireless questers for the meaning in life. Arun Joshi's protagonists are deeply involved in the act of living instead of being reclusive or renouncers of life. Thus, the fictional world of Arun Joshi is peopled with characters who are active and passionate individuals. They always strive hard to find meaning in life. Their search for identity leads to exposure of the intricate human bonds that gets strengthened with their active participation in life.

4. Aims and Objectives

To explore the inner world of characters in Arun Joshi's novels and to prove that the protagonists are not escapists and afraid of the realities.

5. Research Methodology

The research methodology employed herein will be exploratory, interpretative, evaluative and analytical. The questionnaire based on Arun Joshi's novels under the study will be used to elicit responses from literate persons of diverse fields.

6. Limitations of Research

The research work will mainly focus to study the inner world of characters of Arun Joshi's novels.

7. Chapter Scheme

The Chapter Scheme will be as follows:

Chapter one: The Foreigner

Chapter two: The Strange Case of Billy Biswas

Chapter three: The Apprentice

Chapter four: The Last Labyrinth

Chapter five: The City and The River

Chapter six: Conclusion

CHAPTER ONE

His first novel **The Foreigner** reminds us of Camus 'Outsider'. It tells the story of Mr.Sindi Oberai a highly educated individual. He is an orphan born in Nairobi and educated in London. He was brought up by his uncle. His awareness of rootlessness and not belonging turns him into a introvert for a while. He tries to keep away from the society. He feels a foreigner wherever he is. His confrontations with the different situations have made him think of his position as an individual. Gradually, it dawns upon him that meaningful involvement in life gives one happiness and self satisfaction. In the end, he comes to India to be involved. He tries to find solutions to the problems of his fellow men. It appears that he finds a way out for his humanity only when arrives in India, his ancestors' land.

CHAPTER TWO

The second novel, **The Strange case of Billy Biswas** describes the predicament. Billy Biswas a Ph.D., from New York. He was suffocated in the world of sophistication. He is aware of its hypocrisy and inhumanity. He always hears a call, a call from primitive world. He is urged to leave this mercenary world for the one-pure and simple. He knows that the present society is based on the selfish ideals and he is not happy even with his family life. When his individuality threatened, he leaves for the primitive society while he is in one of his expeditions along with his students of the University of Delhi. He finds a soul-mate in the primitive society close to his heart. Here, he gets involved in the life's activities and tries to live a meaningful life. The attempts to bring him back into the main stream life fail as he dies of bullet injuries.

CHAPTER THREE

The third novel, **The Apprentice** tells the story of Rathan Rathore. His father was a freedom fighter. He feels proud of his father. He expects that the society, for which his family made huge sacrifices, would treat him well. With great hopes, he leaves for Delhi, the capital of free India in search of a job. But, to his dismay, he finds none and he begins to lose confidence in himself. At every stage, he gets insulted. He thinks that the society is indifferent to the people who have sacrificed their lives for it. Slowly, he learns to master the tricks of modern bureaucracy into which he makes his way as a temporary hand. Soon, he finds himself on the top by means of fraudulent deals. But, his soul always pricks his conscience. At the end, he realizes the futility of success at the cost of human values and does shoe-shining on the steps of a temple while he is on way to his office daily.

CHAPTER FOUR

The fourth novel, **The Last Labyrinth**, an award winning novel, tells the story of a tycoon of the modern corporate world Som Bhasker, a restless individual. Though married to a woman of his choice, he indulges in several fornications. He always thinks of his self and tries to reach the higher levels in the business world. However, in spite of his successful ventures, into business arena, he fails to remain content. He is troubled by visions. He searches for something which is to fill his heart with happiness but it is always elusive. In his search for it, he meets Anuradha, gorgeous women who try to satisfy his passions. Restlessness ever growing, he feels tortured and becomes violent and tries to finish off himself. But, he was rescued by Geeta.

CHAPTER FIVE

The fifth novel, **The City and the River (1990)** marks a departure thematically from his earlier novels. Here, Arun Joshi tells a tale of a City run under the surveillance of most technologically advanced rulers. It brings to our memory George Orwell's famous novel 1984. He employs flash back technique to narrate the life of the people in the city controlled by the scientific gadgets rather than a king like Grand Master. The activities of the people are constantly observed and detractors are punished. Bhoomiputra is the hero of the novel. He, unlike his predecessors Sindi, Billy Biswas, Somsekar Bhasker and Rathan Rathore, he is a born leader who takes of the cudgels against the atrocities of the Grand Master in support of the boatmen. He is seen as their savior. He makes all efforts to provide a good life from

bondage. When the evils of the Grand Master became unbearable, nature intervenes. As such, the great river in the end engulfs all the evil doers promising them a new land of hope.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION

This chapter will sum up the observations made in the earlier chapters. The findings of Arun Joshi's novels will be highlighted and possible areas for further research will be suggested.

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